

**PRESS RELEASE
OF
THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES**

**On behalf of
James Steele, Jr., Chairman – Tribal Council
March 28, 2008**

Since the beginning of time, the mountains, valleys, and rivers of present day Montana provided a home for the people of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Traditional fishing, hunting, and gathering, and respect for natural resources is our social and environmental compact. It forms the core of Tribal peoples' way of life and defines who we are.

This river, which is now named the Clark Fork, is a natural resource of importance to Tribal people. It is a place where our ancestors traveled, camped, gathered foods and medicines, prayed, hunted, and fished. Today, it is still important to us in these same ways. We drink its water. We dig bitterroots in its floodplains. We harvest basket reeds in its sloughs. We gather pottery clay and pigments from its banks. We hunt deer and elk on its surrounding mountain forests. We take its fish where they still thrive. And, on almost any given day, some of our people are simply praying in its sacred and powerful places, seeking solitude, guidance, and peace from its waters.

Our elders have always told us of the importance of this river and of our responsibility to care for it. We need to respect it and care for it for the short time we are here just as our ancestors did. They ensured that we would inherit a place of beauty and abundance. We must try to do the same for our descendants.

We are heartened by seeing the Clark Fork released to flow freely. We think it can now recover its vitality and power. We feel like on this day, we have honored our compact with the earth, honored our elders, and been responsible parents for our children.

The Tribes thank their fellow governmental trustees, the State of Montana and the United States for their efforts to achieve this historic moment. The Tribes thank the settling defendants, BP-ARCO and NorthWestern Corporation for their willingness to fund this project, and the Tribes thank EnviroCon and all of the contractors involved for performing this good work .

It's a good day to be alive and living next to the Clark Fork River.

Thank you.